

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

AUGUST 2014 | INDIA



Greetings, everybody:

There is no better interruption in the day of a bleary-eyed bureaucrat, glued to his email-, and electric-voice machines, than to get away and meet with alumni. Hearing the stories, learning of surprises (almost always pleasant ones), seeing the evidence of expanded horizons, and thinking of how your Indian sparkle must linger in the memories of the Americans you met... there is nothing like it! The second-best thing is seeing evidence, as in this newsletter, of the wonderful work that all of you do. I am so glad some of you take advantage of the occasional funds that Washington sets aside for alumni projects. As I write, we have the summit between your prime minister and our president coming up, a moment when we look to the future with hope and full expectation that all of us, collectively, will continue to deepen the dialogue between Indians and Americans on issues that matter. Thanks to all our alumni coordinators for working long hours to "perfect" this newsletter. (Even the photo of me that they chose is from ten years ago, before my eyes turned bleary.)

All best,

David Mees, Cultural Counselor, U.S. Embassy New Delhi

NEWS AND ACTIVITIES FROM THE ALUMNI COMMUNITY IN INDIA AND BHUTAN

US CONSULATE CHENNAI

August meeting infuses renewed vigor to EVAA

The Exchange Visitor Alumni Association of the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai had its monthly meeting on August 16, 2014. 18 alumni of various U.S. exchange programs attended the meeting.

Each alumna/alumnus gave a brief self-introduction, followed by their ideas and proposals to engage the alumni corps. Significant outcomes of the meeting were creation of a Google group and several programs that rolled out following the meeting.

Recent SUSI alumna Ms. Kalpana Kannan, Headmistress, Chennai Corporation School, Kottur (a government-run school serving the underserved sections of society) proposed that her school be selected to be transformed into a 'model school' and several alumni activities were lined up.

The gathered EVAA members promised to help out on spoken English, identifying talent in sports and games, and help students learn the fine arts. Mr. Sampath Muthuvelan, an IVLP alumnus from the NGO Nalamdana, promised to screen their recent documentary on child sexual abuse at the school.



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EVAA targets city school for community engagement

As a first event in the series, classical vocalist TM Krishna visited the school on August 25 afternoon and talk to students. EVAA also enlisted his support to conduct regular classical music lessons for the students.

Singers T.M. Krishna and Sangeetha Sivakumar interacting with students. Mr. R.K. Radhakrishnan, Secretary, Exchange Visitor Alumni Association (EVAA) and Ms. Kalpana Kannan, Headmistress, looks on.



Chennai's new PAO inaugurates library at alumni-led school/NGO

On August 27, 2014, PAO Ariel Pollock visited the Home for Poor Boys at the Madrasa-i-Azam Higher Secondary School (headed by IVLP Alumnus Dr. Syed Ameen) and participated in the inauguration of a library. She also spoke to the 100 students of the school emphasizing the people-to-people connections that makes a complete education.

Project Kickst'art kicks off to a grand start

On August 22, 2014, seven alumni gathered to brainstorm and plan for "Project Kickst'art Challenge," a Post-initiated program involving alumni as resource persons to mentor 100 college students from underserved sections of society. Plans are underway to conduct a two-day workshop on September 25-26, 2014.



SUSI alumna felicitated by her alma mater

It was a proud moment for Alpha Arts and Science College as it welcomed Ms. Nivetha Chockalingam, third BBA student of the Alpha Arts and Science College after she successfully completed the Study of the United States Institute (SUSI) for Student Leaders on Women's Leadership Program which was hosted by Kansas University College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, U.S.A. from June 26 to August 3, 2014. CAO Andie De Arment congratulated the school and the grantee in an event hosted by the school. The event amplified the role of cultural and educational exchanges in developing future leaders. Several English and vernacular media covered the event.



CAO Andie De Arment with Ms. Nivetha Chockalingam at the school event

SUSI Alumnus set to create “Agents of Change”

Dr. G. Gopakumar, former head of the Department of Politics and Dean of the Social Science wing of Kerala University, has been appointed Vice Chancellor of the Central University of Kerala (CUK). A champion and veteran teacher of American studies programs in South India, Dr. Gopakumar has been associated with the South India American Studies Network (SIASN), an independent network of

university / college teachers and researchers specializing in the study of the United States of America, for the past two decades, and has been instrumental in introducing American studies in Indian curricula. He attended the Summer Institute on “Political System: Focus on Federalism” in 1996 and was a Salzburg grantee on immigration in 1999. Read more [here](#).

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Chennai alumna wins small grant on innovative health project

Ms. Sridevi Shanmugam, an entrepreneur from Madurai and a Legislative Fellow alumna submitted a proposal “Breast Cancer Awareness” that was selected as one of the 10 winning social innovation projects of World Learning’s 2014 Alumni Engagement Initiative supported by Newman’s Own Foundation to receive a small grant. She also received kudos from the funding organization for the relevance of project topic to issues of global health, her overall project idea servicing an underrepresented demographic in India, and her evaluation plan.

IVLP alumnus a “Champion of Chennai”

On “Madras Day” (August 22) Koothambakkam Panchayat Union President Rangaswamy Elango was awarded the “Champion of Chennai” during the Madras Day celebrations of KSA Trust (an NGO which recognizes outstanding contributions of citizens to social causes and community development) on August 22. A Panchayat (local government) leader of the very village he was born in, Elango, a 2002 IVLP returnee, has been championing rural development enabled by grassroots empowerment, decentralization, and village reconstruction. Read more [here](#).



IVLP alumni Commodore R.S. Vasan, Director, Center for Asia Studies, and Ms. Geeta Ramaseshan, Advocate, at the Judges’ reception

Alumni network co-hosts Judges’ delegation from Maryland

A big reception was hosted by Salzburg alumnus Dr. Vinod Surana, Partner, Surana & Surana International Law Center on behalf of the Exchange Visitor Alumni Association (EVAA) and the Madras Bar Association in his premises on August 11 to honor in honour of and to meet First Lady Hon. Judge Katie O’Malley, Hon. Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Maryland State Supreme Court, Annapolis, Maryland, U.S.A. and other distinguished delegation members on a tour to connect & promote Maryland in Asia. About 100 guests various occupational and professional groups attended the reception of which 20 were U.S. exchange grantees. The reception not only introduced the who’s who of Chennai city to the visiting delegation, but also facilitated networking and camaraderie among the alumni.



US CONSULATE HYDERABAD

August 2014 Alumni Meetup: Celebrating Liberal Arts, STEM, and Failure!

Alumni of Consulate Hyderabad's different exchange programs organized a monthly meet-up on August 22 at the American Corner. PAS Hyderabad provided support for this meet-up. At this event, alumni shared news and views of their ongoing and upcoming activities and programs. IVLP alumnus Nabeel Adeni talked about an innovative initiative founded by him, through which participants shared stories of their failure and the resulting insights they gained. Ruchi Sethia, a SUSI for Student Leaders alumna, highlighted the importance of studying liberal arts and shared her experience of being a Young India Fellow. Another IVLP alumna, Dr. Priya Hasan, shared her experience conducting astronomy workshops

through a grant awarded by the U.S. Consulate Hyderabad. As always, the meet-up provided a great opportunity for alumni to network with each other and discuss ways to collaborate on projects that can help advance the mutual goals of the Consulate and the wider community. The meet-up helped the U.S. Consulate General Hyderabad forge a stronger relationship with its alumni and also contributed to expanding and strengthening people-to-people relationships.

Lunch meeting with recent SUSI for Student Leaders returnees

On August 22, APAO Gurdit Singh, Cultural Affairs Advisor Salil Kader, Cultural Affairs Assistant Senthil Thirupathi and Alumni Relations Coordinator Neha Kanitkar met the recently returned SUSI for Student Leaders alumni – Simran Bhui, Medha Kohli and Zainab Samaad, over a pizza lunch. The alumni shared their exchange experiences, their plans after returning to India and what role they would like to play as alumni.

August 2014 Alumni Meet-Up in Hyderabad



IVLP alumnus Nabeel Adeni talking about his innovative initiative – the FailFest



SUSI for Student Leaders alumna Ruchi Sethia sharing her experiences at the Young India Fellowship



IVLP alumna Dr. Priya Hasan talking about the Astronomy workshops she held in Hyderabad

US CONSULATE KOLKATA

Alumni event to engage youth in building green cities

State Department alumni were part of the core team in the event 'Stakeholder Youth Networking Meet' organized by the American Center on August 26th. The event is part of the State-Department-funded project titled 'Engaging the Youth for building Green Cities' where the focus is on empowering the youth to take on the role of change makers. For the program, the students interacted directly with

stakeholders from the government and NGO sector, including our IVLP alumna Ms. Ajanta Dey, on the panel. Ajanta has been on an IVLP on ecotourism and climate change, and elaborated to the students the importance of conservation methods to prevent the depletion of natural resources and habitats. An inter-school debate competition on the theme 'The role of youth is marginal in

combating climate change' followed the panel discussion, moderated by IVLP alumna Tina Roy. Tina has been on an exchange on climate change, and moderated the event with many insightful observations, that further enriched the discussion. Ms. Dey also went on to judge the competition.



IVLP alumna Ajanta Dey at the panel discussion at the Stakeholder Youth Networking event



IVLP alumna Tina Roy moderates the inter-school debate competition



IVLP alumna Ajanta Dey hands over the prize to a debate participant

CG in Nagaland

The Consul General met with a group of alumni and civil society leaders in her very first visit to Nagaland. The interaction allowed for a better understanding of Naga state, politics, civil society and culture by some of the prime change makers in the region. The alumni are among some of the strongest leaders in the region, all very involved both nationally and internationally in their areas of work. It was a good engagement that allowed us to consolidate our relationship with the alumni in these states as well as provide the current leadership with a balanced perspective on the Naga state and community.



ACCESS Tea at CGR

Ten ACCESS alumni and their teachers met with the Consular General at her residence over tea. The group included three alumni who had just returned from a cultural immersion tour in the U.S. What followed was a very fruitful and enlightening discussion on the various ways in which the Access program has helped in the development of these youngsters, both academically as well as in terms of personality development.



PAO Joanne Joria meets prominent Guwahati alumni on her first visit to the city

Director of the American Center Kolkata, Ms. Joanne Joria, visited the NGO UTSAH led by one of our most prominent Guwahati alumni, Miguel Queah. Miguel is an active crusader of child rights protection in the state of Assam and has done remarkably well towards the upliftment and rehabilitation of the children from underserved communities in the region. As an important figure in Guwahati civil society, the Director's visit to his NGO was a further reaffirmation of our commitment towards our alumni. She was taken on a tour of the facilities, following which the children in the NGO performed a song for her. Later in the evening, Ms. Joria met with a group of important Guwahati alumni and got to know from them their exchange experiences, their career development after the exchange as well as their take on how the USG could be a part of Assam's social and economic development.



The Director of the American Center, Ms. Joanne Joria, with alum Miguel Queah and the children at his NGO UTSAH



Alum Miguel Queah gives the Director an interactive tour of UTSAH

US CONSULATE MUMBAI

YASC-AFS project in Rajasthan:

In the beginning of August, YES alumni from the Western region, Pooja Shah, Drashti Wani, Pratima Padghan and others, participated in the Yale Alumni Service Corps (YASC) Program to India, 2014. AFS India is a key partner for this project, and helped introduce YASC to the village of Kakeleo, through the YES alumni volunteers. The volunteers were part of the YASC group during the service trip and worked alongside, providing translation and other support.





U.S. Speaker Christine Tatum interacts with alumni and conducts Train-the-Trainer Workshop

PAS Mumbai hosted U.S. Speaker, Ms. Christine Tatum Thurstone, on Citizen Journalism between August 5 and August 8, 2014. On August 5th, there was a round-table discussion on Citizen Journalism as a Tool for Activism. Almost half of the participants at the round-table were alumni. On August 6th, Tatum also visited the St. Andrews' College, whose principal is an IVLP alumna, and spoke on Citizen Journalism and its impact with BMM students.



Further, on August 7-8, Tatum conducted a train-the-trainer workshop at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai, for 10 alumni of USG programs (Fulbright, IVLP and ILEP). The alumni will, in turn, conduct citizen journalism training sessions in each of their 5 respective home cities (Mumbai, Pune, Indore, Raipur and Ahmedabad). Most of the alumni are practicing journalists in Western India. The 5 follow-on sessions titled "Empowering Youth as Citizen Journalists" will include students aged 14-25 and take place in both English and local languages.



Inclusive band "Pehli Baarish" launched

Inclusive music band "Pehli Baarish", formed by disabled and non-disabled music maker friends is a way of sharing the gift of music with audiences in an evening of refreshing entertainment. The initiative by IVLP alumna, and founder of Trinayan, Ritika Sahni, was launched at Prerana's Grant Road Centre on 7th August.



Ambassador Stephens' Media Roundtable with Ahmedabad-based Editors

PAS Mumbai organized a media roundtable for interim Ambassador to India, Ambassador Kathleen Stephens, with Ahmedabad based key editors on August 20th. This on-the-record media roundtable provided an overview of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship and shared strategic goals. Most of the editors, including prominent media professionals, Ajay Umat, Shyam Parikh, Leena Misra and others are either IVLP or FCP alumni.

IVLP alumnus conducts three-day gender-sensitization workshop

In India, traditional efforts to tackle gender-based violence against women have concentrated on empowering women to assert themselves and prevent violence. This approach insulates men from the process of transformation and keeps them embedded in their patriarchal mold. Patriarchy, apart from disadvantaging women, brings with it a set of behavioral norms and responsibilities that hinders men from expressing their fears, problems and vulnerabilities. The situation necessitates efforts that address how men can analyze perceptions of masculinity and create appropriate alternatives. Such platforms can be

provided by having a pool of young male communicators, who would communicate with many other men and initiate a healthy dialogue in the community. As part of U.S. Consulate General Mumbai's Small Grants Program, MAVA (Men Against Violence And Abuse), founded by IVLP alumnus, Harish Sadani, plans to continue this Gender-Sensitization Program with youths in select 9 colleges spread across Mumbai, with a recently held 3 day workshop on Perspective Building to a group of College youth from August 15 to 17, 2014, at Don Bosco School, Matunga.

Alumni at the National Day event

On August 22, the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai celebrated its National Day.



Alumni with Chargé d'Affaires, Ambassador Stephens, and US Marines at the National Day party.

AMERICAN CENTER NEW DELHI

American Center staff visits CCIP alumni at local NGO partner Manzil

On a hot August afternoon, First Secretary, Ms. Katie Caro, and American Center staff visited some alumni of the Community College Initiative Program (CCIP) based at the local NGO, Manzil. Manzil provides extra-curricular classes for disadvantaged children (and their parents!) in a variety of subjects, ranging from English, Mathematics, Computer Literacy, Music and Dance. Many of Manzil's teachers - including a number of CCIP alumni - are those who grew up attending the classes and programs offered by Manzil. The core team at

Manzil graciously hosted the AmCenter staff, who interacted with the CCIP alumni, members of the band Manzil Mystics, and other teachers and students at Manzil. Many thanks to Geetika, Anurag, Reshma, Ankit, and Ravi, founder of Manzil, for showing us around and sharing their wonderful work!

Right: First Secretary Katie Caro and Program Officer Ramesh Jain with staff, students, and CCIP alumni at Manzil



Alumna's foundation releases report on women on corporate boards in India

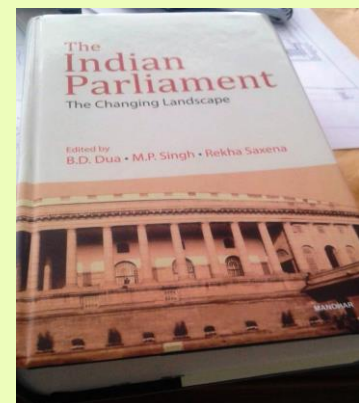
Biz Divas Foundation, along with leading law firm, Khaitan & Co., launched the report on "Women on Boards — Policy, Process and Implementation Roadmap" on August 6th. The report is a joint effort to give India Inc. a roadmap on how to fill the 966 vacancies for women on corporate boards that have been created by the latest *Companies Act* and must be filled by October 1st. The launch was held at the Palladium Hotel in Mumbai and saw eminent guests in attendance. To read the report, click [here](#).

The report garnered considerable coverage in the press, including [this article](#) in *The Times of India*. Biz Divas was founded by *Fortune/US State Department's Global Women's Mentoring Partnership* alumna, Sarika Bhattacharyya.

IVLP Alumna publishes book chapter on Effectiveness of Indian Parliament

The recently published book on the Indian Parliament, *The Indian Parliament: The Changing Landscape* ed. by B.D. Dua, M.P. Singh, Rekha Saxena, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi (2014), includes a chapter on "Measuring Effectiveness of India's Parliament" jointly written by Kaushiki Sanyal (who is an alumna of IVLP) and C.V. Madhukar. The chapter explores conceptual frameworks and criteria that would help measure the effectiveness and efficiency of parliamentary functioning. An attempt has been made to develop some metrics of performance based on the broad functions of Parliament such as time spent in debating a Bill, number of questions asked and the working of Standing Committees. The paper also examines some issues of institutional design that have an impact on the effectiveness of Parliament as well as the tug of war between the legislature and the executive to gain supremacy. For example, although statistics show a sharp decline in the number of sitting days of Parliament, it is

important to know that it is the government, according to the Constitution, that decides the dates of parliamentary sessions provided it abides by the six-month rule. In the concluding section, there are some suggestions that could be a starting point for a debate on how the Indian Parliament can be made more effective in the years ahead, notwithstanding the empirical difficulty of evaluating Parliament independent of the role of the Executive. For a review of the book, see [here](#).



BHUTAN**IVLP alumna concludes solid waste management alumni project in Thimphu**

Minjur Dorji, IVLP alumna from Thimphu, successfully completed an alumni project by conducting several cleanup campaigns in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. On August 19, over 1000 people participated in a mass cleanup drive in different parts of the city. The campaign was organized in partnership with the Class of 2014 of the National Graduate Orientation Program (NGOP). Through this initiative, Mr. Dorji, aimed to create awareness on managing waste and improve cleanliness of the city.



ALUMNI IN PRINT**SUSI for Student Leaders 2012 alumna from Hyderabad shares her experiences at the Young India Fellowship**

Ruchi Sethia, a SUSI for Student Leaders 2012 alumna shares her experience as a 2013 Fellow at the prestigious graduate program in Liberal Arts - the Young India Fellowship (YIF). She was also a Teaching Assistant for the class of 2014 at the Young India Fellowship. In her write-up, Ruchi also highlighted the important role her exchange program played in helping her win this opportunity. Ruchi presented her experiences at the YIF at the August meet-up with other alumni. To read more, please click on the icon:

**IVLP alumnus writes an article on the need to encourage children to acquire reading skills in India**

IVLP alumnus and the Founder of Bakul Foundation in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Sujit Mahapatra, wrote a guest column for The Telegraph about the lack of reading skills in India, the factors that are contributing to this problem and the urgent need to change the status quo and encouraging children to read books and acquire strong reading skills. You can read the article [here](#).

IVLP alumnus writes an article on the celebration of the Nuakhai festival in western Odisha juxtaposed with the plight of the farmers in the drought-stricken region

IVLP alumnus Ranjan Panda (popularly known as the Waterman of Odisha), wrote an article on Nuakhai, literally meaning 'eating newly harvested rice', an agrarian festival adopted from the tribal communities of western Odisha. Ranjan writes about how even though Nuakhai has taken the shape of a mass festival, agriculture in the belt is suffering from many woes, especially drought. Climate change and lack of action from government is resulting in insurmountable challenges for the farmers. Read the article [here](#).

SUSI for Student Leaders 2013 alumna writes a thought-provoking blog-post on ethics in journalism

Alumna Simran Bhui, a SUSI for Student Leaders on Journalism and New Media 2013, wrote a blog post about her experiences while on the program. In her post, she raises some pertinent questions about being a journalist and also a human being, the responsibility of making choices and balancing

one's personal and professional expectations. The blog post has been featured in the "Foundation for International Understanding Through Students" (FIUTS) of University of Washington in Seattle. You can read Simran's blog [here](#).

IVLP alumna featured as a noteworthy changemaker in India Today's Independence Day edition

IVLP alumna Arati Devi, featured as a noteworthy changemaker in India Today's Independence Day edition. Arati, an investment banker-turned-sarpanch of Dhunkapada Panchayat in Odisha's Ganjam district, was lauded for her work in streamlining the Public Distribution System, starting a literacy campaign for women in her area, and helping change the mindset of villagers and making local government self-participatory. Read more [here](#).

Alumna Binalakshmi Nephram's views on status of NE migrants in Delhi quoted in *The Hindu*

Binalakshmi Nephram is a leading alumna from the state of Manipur. Awarded the Indian of the Year award by CNN IBN in 2011, Binalakshmi is an alumna of the CONTACT program. Her organization – The Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network – works for the social and economic rehabilitation of the families of victims of war in insurgency-ridden Manipur. She has also actively crusaded for the victims of discrimination from the

northeast, and has been working with the Indian Government and policy makers in the amendment of the Anti-Discrimination laws. She was quoted in this August 9th article on Delhi Lieutenant-Governor's high-level committee on "Safety and other concerns of the Northeast (NE) people in Delhi". Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



IVLP alumna featured in *Outlook Business*

IVLP alumna Biplab Paul's journey in Bhungroo Technology featured as "GOOD BUSINESS" by Outlook Business in their Independence Day 2014 special issue. He emailed saying that, "credit goes to American Centre as well. In 1997-8, we were simple, raw grassroot workers on water issues; no one looked at our work and cared to listen to us. But you listened and we were fortunate to be part of global delegation to Pakistan on water issues. After that nothing to look back. IVLP, World Bank Development Marketplace award in India, Centennial Innovation Challenge Award, Ambassador for Peace award and plenty more; now media houses are here. But we still owe our success to you people only. Thanks."



Read the article on Biplab and his work [here](#).

Goa SUSI participant interview in *Navhind Times*

Navhind Times, Goa, carried an interview of a Don Bosco Goa student, Mithali Rathod, who went to the U.S. to participate in a U.S. State Department-funded SUSI Program. *Navhind Times* also carried a quote of PAO Philip Roskamp explaining the importance of such programs. The interview was organized and proposed by PAS. It highlighted the benefits of educational exchange opportunities and promoted study in the U.S.



Op-Ed by IVLP alumna

IVLP alumna Rishi Aggarwal's first op-ed "[Leadership For Smart Cities](#)" appeared in the DNA newspaper on August 26th.

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